WILLIAM HENRY
HARRISON HOME

VINCENNES, INDIANA

Knox Co.

HABS NO. 24-17

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

District No. 24

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
HERBERT W. FOLTZ, DISTRICT OFFICER
1034 Architects Building, Indianapolis

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The attached 22 pages of data relating to this project have been so carefully prepared and the historical background has been so skillfully interwoven with the architecture of this historic building that the urge to depart from the official instructions regarding brevity of presentation of this material has been irresistible.

Inclusion of the text in its entirety as furnished by members of the D.A.R. in Vincennes therefore is made with the hope that its value as a contribution to the early history of a far greater area of the United States than Indiana will be more acceptable than any attempt the District Officer might make to put it in briefer form.

The following brief description of the building was prepared by the Old Post Association, of Vincennes, Mr. Curtis G. Shake, President.

"Perhaps the most valuable historic shrine in Indiana is the old colonial home built and occupied by William Henry Harrison while governor of Indiana Territory. This fine old mansion was much more than a residence. It was in every sense of the word the 'White House of the West.' Erected in 1804, it is said to have been the first brick building in Vincennes.

Grouseland originally occupied an estate of 300 acres along the Wabash, immediately north of Vincennes. About the house stood a magnificent grove of native walnut trees. It was in this grove that General Harrison held his famous council with the Indian chief, Tecumseh, in 1811.

The Harrison house was preserved and is owned by the Francis Vigo Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution. The property is maintained through a modest admission charge. The chapter is gradually

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restoring the house to its original appearance and refurnishing it in keeping with its period. Many fine specimens of colonial furniture, some of which belonged to the Harrison family, may be found there."

An interesting feature of the house is the council room where General Harrison conducted his business as Superintendent of Indian Affairs. While historians are not agreed regarding the existence of a secret stairway and passageway to the river bank for escape in the event of Indian attacks, powder magazine for storing ammunition, the look-out on top of the house and the hole in a shutter caused when an ambushed savage shot at General Harrison, the present generation in Vincennes believes firmly in the existence of these striking reminders of pioneer days.

The Harrison house was, and is, a mansion in every sense of the word. The architecture is Georgian and the masonry and woodwork are of the finest materials and evidence a skill that is both interesting and refreshing.

-April 28, 1934

(Signed) Herbert W. Foltz
DISTRICT OFFICER

Restored 1936 by H.C.F.

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I.

SITE AND BUILDING MATERIALS.

The first documentary record relative to the ground upon which the Harrison Mansion stands, was the Second Charter of Virginia, conveying from King James I to the Treasurer and Company of Adventurers and Planters of the City of London, for the First Colony in Virginia, all the territory being in that part of America called Virginia, from the point of land called "Cape of Point Comfort" for two hundred miles all along the seacoast to the northward; for two hundred miles to the southward of said point; and westward from sea to sea; and also all the islande lying within one hundred miles along the coast of both seas of the aforesaid precinct.

This grant was made in 1609.

After the Revolution, the newly formed Government, seeing the necessity of poesessing this vast territory, suggested and requested Virginia to cede it to the United States, expressing the hope that other states which held waste lands would follow Virginia's example.

Therefore, Virginia appointed Thomas Jeffereon, James Monroe, Samuel Hardy and Arthur Lee delegates to Congress for the Commonwealth of Virginia, vesting them with power to deed back to the United States all claim which Virginia had to the territory within the limits of the Virginia Charter, being northwest of the Ohio River. This deed of ceesion was made March 1, 1784.

Thus it will be seen that between the grant from King James I and the deed made by Virginia to the United States, there was an interval of one hundred and seventy-five years.

This territory seems to have become known as Prairie Survey, and from the American State Papers, it appears that Prairie Survey Two and Prairie Survey Three, North Range Ten, Town Three, were confirmed by the United States

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Land Commissioners to William Henry Harrison, but no grant appears of record, and no dates are given in these papers.

In the year 1814, the Recorder's office of Knox County, Indiana, was entirely destroyed by fire and all of the contents burned. Thus was lost to us the authentic records of the succession of the ground upon which Harrison Mansion stands. There is no doubt but had these records not been destroyed, there would have been a wealth of information to be obtained from romantic and thrilling documents pertaining to the great Northwest Territory.

When William Henry Harrison was appointed Superintendent of Indian affairs and Governor of the Indiana Territory, he had an official dignity to maintain, and was also a Virginian, so must have a home in keeping with his position and family traditions. Therefore, he bought three hundred acres north of the village.

The site selected for the Governor's Mansion was a knoll with a gentle slope on the west to the River, just north of the Old Post Settlement of Vincennes. It was covered with walnut trees, one of which survives. This is known as the "Treaty Tree," and has been marked by the Standard Oil Company, present owner of the property on which it stands.

Under the trees in this grove, the famous interview between Harrison and Tecumseh took place, in which the Indian chief protested the validity of the white man's right to occupy this land, formerly the uncontested possession of the Indians.

As there were only about eight hundred people in the village, and but five thousand in the whole Northwest Territory, it is not strange that there were few skilled workmen; so a contractor, one William Lindsey, was brought here to have charge of the work of building the Governor's Mansion.

William Lindsey, born in Chester County, Pennsylvania, in 1760, directed the construction of the Harrison home. He had enlisted in the Revolution at the age of 16, and was only twenty when discharged. He was a Scotchman, and it is thought he was of the line of Sir Walter de Lindisis, who attended David, the Earl of Huntington in his colonization of the lowlands in the twelfth century.

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The lot upon which the D.A.R. Tablet identifying the location of Fort Sackville now stands, was once the property of William Lindsey. (This is the same site now occupied by the George Rogers Clark Memorial.) William came to Vincennes in 1800 with his wife and nine children, down the Ohio on flat boats, then up the Wabash against stream, the popular route for immigration from the East, as were the buffalo traces for pioneers from Kentucky. It is interesting to note that the Wabash was once known as the "St.Jerome," and afterwards was called the Wabash, from the Indian name, spelled "Ouabasche."

The plan for the Harrison Mansion was brought from the East, and its style is designed after an old Virginia plantation mansion which it meant to imitate. (This no doubt is 'Berkeley' his birthplace.) It differs in that it was built as a combination home and fortress, similar to the purposes of the baronial feudal castles.

The bricks were made by hand of clay from a farm three miles away, and floated down a creek on boats. For making and burning these bricks, (two hundred thousand of them,) the Thompson family received a deed to four hundred acres of land valued by Harrison at $2.50 an acre. This family still has this deed.

There is a current story that one load of bricks was delivered on Sunday, and that they were never paid for. Mr. John Thompson gave this account of it to a D.A.R. investigator. His ancestor, Sam Thompson, who made the bricks on his farm east of the City, did make a mistake in his calendar, and delivered a load of bricks, thinking it was Saturday. Governor Harrison refused to accept them on that day. The bricks probably were taken back to the brick-yard, for there were no bricks unpaid for in the annals of the Thompson family. Mr. John Thompson related that his ancestor, being a strict and pious Presbyterian, observed Monday for his Sabbath that week.

This was the first brick house in Indiana Territory and men had to be taught to make the brick. One record states that the outer, or face brick, was brought on flat boats from New Orleans, (which seems plausible, as from the old newspapers of that period, we know that almost everything

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was obtained from New Orleans) while the lining and inner brick was made in Illinois, directly across from the Mansion. The Lindseys aver that this is the correct story of the location of the brickyard. Bricks may have been made in both places.

The wood for the Mansion was obtained from the surrounding woods, the trees being felled, allowed to season, then split and sawed by hand. An inspection of the basement of the house reveals the hugeness of the trees that were used. Every lath, many of which are of walnut, and all the cypress clap-boards for the roof, were shaped, dressed and made by hand. Think of making enough laths and roofing and timbers for a building by hand labor!

Thousands of nails of many sizes had to be made by a blacksmith, and many hundreds of wooden pins, large and small, whittled by hand. The hardware was hammered out by the village blacksmith in part, but most of it came from the East, overland or by river, some pieces having been ordered from England.

The moldings used, and the decoration of the mantels had to be made by slow methods. Two of these mantels were said by one authority to have been imported from London.

The limestone blocks that wall the whole basement up to the ground level were floated down the Wabash from Fort Knox, a distance of five miles. The glass for the forty windows was probably made by the Boston Crown Window Glass Company, as they were the only successful manufacturers of window glass in this country in the early part of the nineteenth century. The plaster was made by the old method of lime, sand and hair saved from hogs at butchering time.

The floor of the first story, forming the basement ceiling, is double, and between the two floorings is a thick layer of mortar, made of clay and straw, which it is thought, was for deadening the noise, hilarity and boisterousness from below, of servants, soldiers and ofttimes, prisoners.

A report was once given of the woodwork, based upon a careful examination by a lumber concern. It was

found that the stairway and kitchen mantel are of walnut, while the mantels of both the Council Chamber and the Chapter room are of poplar. The other woodwork in the rooms is of poplar, chestnut, pine and walnut, all used in the same room. This fact indicates that the white paint was used for the woodwork because of the variety of grains which would show in the natural finish.

The massive beams of the basement are of walnut in every instance. So the building of a fine house in the Capital of a new Territory was of no small undertaking in 1801. Under such necessarily slow and laborious pioneer workmanship and transportation, in the face of local dangers, "Grouseland," as this estate was called, was finished three years later, in 1804, at a cost of $20,000. History tells that pending the building of the Mansion, Harrison and his family lived in the home of Francis Vigo, and moved into the partly finished home in 1803. It was completed in 1804.

The Governor's mansion was an imposing structure, altogether suitable for the official residence of the Governor, a comfortable home for his estimable wife and family, as well as a dignified and commodious house in which to entertain their friends and visiting officials for long periods.

This brick house, a palace for those days, awed the Indians. From this mansion, Harrison not only ruled the great Northwest Territory, but for a time, held sway over the whole vast Louisiana Purchase west of the Mississippi River.

William Henry Harrison, in 1821, conveyed by "Warranty Deed, Love and affection" to his son, John Cleves Symmes Harrison, all that square with the buildings thereon, wherein the said John Cleves Symmes now resides, and bounded by Parke Street, Perry Street, Scott Street, and the Wabash River, reserving however, the right of opening a street of sixty feet in width across said square, immediately along the bank of the River, should he, the said William Henry, "think proper to do so at any time hereafter."

John Cleves Symmes Harrison's daughter, Mrs. Anna Maria Roberts, conveyed in 1843, the house and grounds to

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Hiram Decker. Mr. Decker doubted the legality of her ability to convey just the square upon which the house stood, as she was joint heir of the whole property. So he instituted a partition proceeding to set aside the portion occupied by the house.

As required by law, the Commissioners advertised and published this intention and action, but none of the Harrison heirs appeared to contest the partition suit, so the Commissioners declared the property sold to Mr. Decker for $1200.00.

Thus, after having been occupied by three generations of the Harrison family, the Harrison Mansion known as "Grouseland," passed out of their possession in 1848. After passing into the possession of various owners, after the desecration and abuse of unoccupied years, used once as a hotel, again as a storage place for grain, it was on the eve of being razed, when the Francis Vigo Chapter, D.A.R. raised funds and bought it, and are the present owners. They have engaged in the patriotic duty of preserving and restoring the Mansion.

-:-

-Gertrude McDonald
Nov. 19, 1929.

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II.

BELOW STAIRS

Almost at the first step down the basement stairs, interest in Colonial architecture receives a stimulus that never flags throughout a ramble cellar-wise. Here on this reverse side of the upper wall, one sees the wooden pins holding the paneling in place, and also the rough hand hewn timbering overhead. At the foot, looking up, you see the core of the newel post projecting from the floor above anchored by a stout wooden pin.

This room corresponds to the hall above in size and shape. Directly facing the stairway, is the windowless space, originally arched over with bricks, still showing on the side walls where the arch rested. Many of us remember when fragments of the arch remained, enough to show the curve of the arc. Due to crumbling of the structure, and pilferings of relic hunters, bit by bit it disappeared.

This has always been known as the "Powder Magazine." In an article appearing in the Vincennes Sun., March 29, 1886, its author, Miss Annabel Fleming, speaks of this as "An apartment used as a powder magazine, built in the shape of a Dutch oven, protected by heavy iron doors." Even at that time, the arch was partially destroyed and the doors gone. The close of her article, of which we will hear again, gives credit for her information to a Mrs. Wolverton, who was a constant visitor during the residence of Governor Harrison, and to Mrs. Mary O. Pidgeon, the present owner, (1886). Miss Fleming's paper was delivered from the front portico of the historic house to the Southern Teachers' Association.

Another article on March 11, same year, by C. Walter Barr, also speaks of the "powder magazine in the form of a Dutch oven, and that the ceiling over it, and in fact throughout the basement, was made fire proof by a daubing of mud and straw on lathing."

Many today discount the magazine explanation for this arched compartment, saying that Harrison would never have stored gun powder in a building that housed his wife and children. On the other hand, if he feared and prepared for Indian attacks, a store of powder in the basement would have been far more useful than in an outbuilding. Many features about the house bear out the idea of preparation for defense.

If not used as a safe and dry repository for powder, imagination has never figured out a better or more plausible reason for its construction.

On the left, as you leave the stairway, is a large spare room, well lighted, brick floored, as were all the basement floors save one, and with an open fireplace, now sealed up. Here, one of the two windows, like most of the cellar windows, shows in its upper sill the sockets that held the stout wooden or iron bars that protected from marauders or incursions of stray animals. The lower sills have long since been replaced. Some think that these windows were for defense, commanding as they do all approaches to the house, but there is no evidence that they were used for other than light and ventilation.

This room is known as the children's schoolroom. As the rooms above were constantly or frequently occupied by prominent men deliberating on weighty affairs of state, and also were often filled by brilliant social gatherings, both in the time of Harrison, and later in the time of his son, John Cleves Symmes Harrison, (quoting George Green in his history of Vincennes), it is not unnatural that the children would be relegated to below stairs for study and play.

A second room back of this offers for inspection another open fireplace, the flue now sealed, one outside window, and an inner window opening into the space back of this room. No satisfactory explanation is given of the use of this room. It might have been a store room, but more probably was a servant's sleeping quarters.

Back of this room and the hall, in a long transverse, windowless space, underlies what was originally an open court. Until reoent years, this room had a dirt floor, the only one in the basement. Here is seen overhead one of the priceless black walhut beams, a good example of the massiveness of the supporting beams used in construction, though far shorter than many hidden by plaster in upper ceilings. Here in this room is the traditional site of the "dungeon," supposedly used "for detention of refractory servants or prisoners of war." One man in town said that he remembered the dungeon, and described it as a very small room about five feet by eight, but when asked to visit the house to locate its site, he said that he would not be able to do so, as his memory of it was so hazy, and he might have it mixed up with something else. As so small a cell would be worse than the Black Hole of Calcutta, it is safe to presume that the dungeon was some form of closet that grape-vine gossip has elevated to the dignity of a cell. Quoting Miss Fleming's article, "Near the center of the basement is a stone windowless dungeon, though for what purpose is not known." If there was such a cell or closet, it must have been at one end or other of

this room under the open court. Now, a very modern furnace occupies one end of this room.

Beyond this and under the secondary house, came the servants' kitchen and dining room. There is an outside entrance to the kitchen for the use of the servants, and a second opening, used now as a coal chute, that is comparatively modern. The fireplace is the only one in the house that is exactly as it was in Harrison's time. The original hand-wrought crane is still anchored in the brickwork. It is needless to say that this open fireplace is a prized possession.

In the dining room alongside the kitchen is a built-in cupboard, at least one shelf of which is the original poplar board put in at the time of building. The windows here and in the kitchen show the hand rived finish, and one, the hand split laths in the under surface of the upper casing, leading one to the conclusion that the plaster of the wall was carried over the entire casing, presumably to fire-proof the woodwork. There was a well or spring in this room as well as from the kitchen to the dark, transverse space already described.

Returning to the hallway and the foot of the stairs, one turns to the right into two more rooms. The front one is small, has an open fireplace, now sealed, two windows showing sockets for bars, and in the comer a bricked-up drain. This has always been called the wine room. As in Harrison's time nearly every home made wine, it is probable that this Virginia gentleman made provision for its manufacture at Grouseland. Mrs. Harrison was a very pious woman, and might have discouraged the use of wine. This room might have been used for laundry work, the fireplace, the drain, and the well in the adjoining room making this practicable.

But it is the larger room that intrigues the imagination. The outer wall curves in a long arc, harmonizing with the sweeping bay of the rooms above. In this bay are two windows, the place of the third being occupied by a second outside entrance, possibly for the purpose of carrying firewood or supplies. Northeast of the center of the room was another well, filled and sealed about six years ago. The two wells show the house was well equipped with water to withstand siege.

"The secret tunnel" has always been associated with this room. The gap in the foundation stones of the northeast wall, (the rear wall,) the slight recess in the brickwork above, and the stout walnut lintel still overhead, show conclusively that an opening of some kind was there once.

Many scout the idea of a tunnel; others rise up in its defense. Three historians, Henry Cauthorn, Doctor Smith and George Green, place no credence in the tunnel, magazine or dungeon, though Green credits the last. Miss Fleming was silent on the subject of the tunnel. Some of the older inhabitants of the town smile when it is discussed, and frankly say there never was one. On the other hand many claim to have seen it.

Calling at the home of John Thompson, grandson of the man who made the bricks for the house, this information was received. He knew there was a tunnel, though he never saw it. His wife, Sally Ackerly Thompson, said that she had played in it while the Pidgeon family lived there; that in the game of hide-and-seek it was a favorite hiding place. She had been through it to the River end, where there was a heavy iron door to keep out the water in time of flood. The entrance was in the Northeast wall and was arched over, but she could not remember the construction of the tunnel, whether of logs or brick or stone, as she was very young at the time.

Mr. Edward Yocum says that he saw the entrance to the tunnel when he was a lad of about sixteen. He used to visit in the house then owned by Flavius Pidgeon. There were steps leading down, but they were dark, damp and dirty, so he felt no desire to explore. Unfortunately for his evidence, he places this entrance in the southwest corner of the wine room. When repairs were made half a dozen years ago, some bricks were removed from the flooring, and some digging done, but no trace of steps was found. One can only think that his memory played him false.

Many remember that Mr. Earl Buck told that he had played in the tunnel when he and Flavius Pidgeon were boys together and that the entrance was in the back wall of the room usually associated with it. Six years ago, in response to a notice in the paper asking for information on this subject, a Mr. William Schultz gave this story to Mrs. Leo Schultheis. When a boy of eight or ten or twelve, he had an appointment to meet a group of boys on the river front. While waiting for them, sitting on the bank above the tunnel exit, which he described as a heavy wooden door set in a low brick foundation, he jumped down on this sloping door, which proved rotten. It broke and let him drop into a pit. The steps leading up out of this hole were rotted away, so he could not get out. He waited for the boys to come to help him out. They did not come. Knowing of the tunnel, he started through it to the house, coming into this room with the bay side, and through the back wall.

In later years, when the Water Company made excavation for the standpipe in 1886, he and Hiram Foulks and another man were standing by when the workmen broke into this old tunnel. At the time, he went through again to the house. His impression was that he walked down an incline for a while, and then upgrade again. He further stated that the Water Company opened the tunnel to the river, filled it in, and threw the bricks of the exit into the concrete foundation of the standpipe. He did not know whether they filled in any on the side of the Mansion.

He gave this description of the construction of the tunnel. The sides were a solid row of vertical logs, split in half, flat side in; the roof half logs with the flat side down; and a floor of similar logs, flat side up. He went to the river side with Mrs. Schultheis and showed where the tunnel came out near a tree, but whether the tree now there, is the one of his youth is doubtful. Inquiry in the Foulkes family found they do not remember their father talking of this experience. An afternoon at the Sun Office, looking over the files of the year 1886, discovered no busy reporter on the job. There were occasional notices of progress of work, but no mention of the incident narrated above.

At a time of recent repairs, a few bricks were removed from the panel in this back wall and some digging done, but nothing of value in the way of proof was found, except that the soil seemed to have been filled in and would cave in ahead of the shovel, according to Sam Kirk, the Contractor. Also a trench was dug in the yard, hoping to cut the line of the tunnel, but nothing was found. The wall was sealed up again after this inadequate search, waiting until such time as greater funds or interest invite the adventurer to exploration.

About twenty years ago, a Mr. Sam Harding told to Mr. Donald Cummins that when the excavation was made for the Water Works, they broke into the old tunnel. He does not remember whether Mr. Harding told that he went into it, or whether the digging was for the standpipe or for some other part of the buildings. He suggested that I talk to Mr. George Herrin. Mr. Herrin said that he had often heard his friend Harding tell this same story, and he is emphatic in his belief that there was a tunnel. One time he himself was exploring along the river front, and found some bricks that high water had washed out of the exit.

Mr. George Sparrow is another who has always claimed to have been in the tunnel, but he is too much of an invalid now to be interviewed.

Also, about twenty years ago, Mr. Henry Gravel, who used to live south of town, told to Mrs. George McCoy that there was a tunnel, that he had been in it with another boy, playing on the water front. They found this opening and went through the tunnel until they came to a wooden door, when they went back.

All of these stories sound very convincing to those who wish to find confirmation of the tunnel, and they find encouragement from the very discrepancies in the various accounts of it. But honesty compels one to admit that those who smile over the idea, smile on.

As the Mansion was built for a fortress as well as for a home, and as Indian troubles were not abated for many years, it is plausible that the tunnel was built for a means of escape to the river, as tradition has always given it.

(In 1934, the Francis Vigo Chapter is investigating the report of a volume of William Henry Harrison's Diary. If this is found to be extant, and the contents as stated, there will be his own confirmation of these tantalizing stories of the house, that to date are unprovable, but so appealing.)

In connection with the basement, one may be pardoned for mentioning the "Palisade." Quoting Miss Fleming's article of 1886, "A palisade of catalpa posts guarded the river front, behind which a small force could do effective work in case of need. Quite recently, one of these posts was dug up by State Geologist Collett and found to be in remarkably good condition." Barr also refers to the poplar palisade that had aroused the interest of the geologists.

Through the courtesy of Miss Kitchell, Librarian, inquiry was made at the State Library in regard to this. There is nothing about it in Mr. Collett's report. However, in a Geological Survey for the year 1873, (pages 364-365), is this interesting report:- "President Harrison on his visit to Vincennes in 1840, publicly called attention to the fact that a picket fence built by him along the river front of his former residence, was in good order after forty year's service. This fence later was cut away for firewood, but on examination, the portion of the posts (Mulberry and Catalpa) buried in the earth, was found to be as sound as if cut yesterday. Catalpa posts set by Harrison about the Governor's house in 1808 were taken up, Mr. Pidgeon informs us, a few years ago, and being sound, were reset in another place."

In searching for first hand evidence of any of the debatable features of the basement, I talked with Mr. Edward Smith, one of our oldest citizens. His testimony was all negative, although he had never been in the basement in his youth. But he distinctly remembers the posts on the River front. Thinking that people had confused Harrison's fence with this so-called palisade, I asked him if the posts he saw were part of this fence. He said they were not; that they were upright posts on the river front, and that he judged they were put there to protect the bank from the encroachments of the river, and not for military purposes. A similar row was planted in front of the fort (Fort Sackville, now the site of the George Rogers Clark Memorial). He did not think they were dignified with the name of "Palisades" in former years. His memory coupled with the reports gives credence to the "Palisades," whatever their object.

Eva Bruner Davenport,

Compiled January 1930

Re-copied March 1934

III.

FIRST FLOOR

To the William Henry Harrison Mansion in the Northwest Territory came the distinguished, the illustrious, the cultured. Of one accord they all acclaimed it a "home of exceptional charm." To the old Harrison Mansion of Vincennes, come now the historians, the architects, the connoisseurs of antiques, the lovers of tradition, and those interested in their Country's past.

It has indeed a distinctive character all its own. A frontier dwelling of brick walls, (28 inches think), false windows, look-out! Its owner was a pioneer famed for bravery in Indian wars. A home of panelled doors, carved woodwork, spiral stairway--all evoking the delicacy and finesse of the Old South. Its owner belonged to an aristocratic Virginia family. William Lindsey, builder of the house, combined the two influences with such skill that the former "White House" of the West--on the Wabash--remains among America's most cherished possessions.

The massive door of solid walnut with a handmade lock and key, over which is an unusual fan-shaped transom of eight panes, opens into a typical colonial hallway, the general plan of which resembles that of Federal Hill, (My Old Kentucky Home). It is very wide and a part of the ceiling extends to the third floor.

Governor Harrison, after a visit to Mt. Vernon, was so impressed by the staircase there that he had a copy of it made for his own home. It is said to be the only other one like it. The carved, solid walnut arch is self supporting, and reaches to the ceiling, and is almost the width of the hall. A picture, (Washington's Last Birthday), at the right of the entrance, shows the stairs at Mt. Vernon, and illustrates the narrowness compared with the one in the Harrison Mansion. On this wall is a Chippendale mirror presented by Governor Harrison to Mrs. Henry Vanderburgh. Mr. Vanderburgh was Judge at that time.

It has always been a struggle for the Francis Vigo Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution to keep on with the necessary restoration of the Mansion. A few years ago, the State Officers, realizing this, started the movement which resulted in raising a ten thousand dollars each and finished the fund. A bronze tablet inscribed with their names hangs at the left of the door leading into the living room. Interest from this trust fund is paid semi-annually to the Chapter.

But there is nothing in the hall of such intrinsic interest as the secret panel; so let us investigate it at once. Some boys, playing in a little room overhead, loosened a board, and found a tiny dark room. Whether this was used as a secret hiding place for valuables, or was a part of the secret passage leading from the garret to the first floor, as tradition gives it, has not been proved as yet. At the time of extensive repairs, when the paper and plaster were removed from this wall, a lintel was uncovered, showing that an opening had been there at one time, so a narrow door was introduced at that place.

Harrison's living room was on the north side, huge, lofty-ceilinged, heated by two small fireplaces, common in those days. In an article taken from the Vincennes Sun., March 29, 1886, was the following: "In the sides of the fireplaces are long, narrow cupboards, the upper part of which contain secret panels, evidently used to conceal treasure. These cannot be opened, but are found to be hollow. Whatever the use of these shelved closets, they add materially to the interest of the house. They are usually referred to as "wine closets." Two large mirrors in ornamental frames of gilt, surmounting the mantels, accentuate the effect of imposing grandeur.

Windows, great caverns in the wall, are prudently protected by inside shutters. These were always kept shut, and on one occasion saved the life of Harrison. He was walking the floor with his infant son, John Scott Harrison, when a prowling Indian shot at him through the window. The shutter however, impaired his vision, and the shot missed its mark. The bullet hole in the shutter is a matter of great interest to tourists.

The Love-seat in the living room belonged to the Harrison family, also the straight chair standing beside it. On the wall hang pictures of Harrison at different periods. Other pictures in the room are: The Francis Vigo Home where Harrison lived before his own was completed: The Harrison House as it looked when the open court extended to the veranda on the north side.

Many old houses had only a few closets. Not so the house at "Grouseland." There is a large clothes closet on the right of the rear fireplace and deep wine closets on each side of the door leading into what was formerly the open court.

Upon leaving the living room we cross this spaoe, now enclosed, and enter the state dining room, small, compared with the other rooms in the house. A curved wall at the rear of the room furnishes space for the winding stairway going up from the outside entrance to the servants' sleeping quarters above. A small closet is beneath these stairs.

Next to this room is the kitchen where the family meals were prepared. There is a built-in cupboard reaching to the ceiling.

On the left as you enter the main entrance is the Council Chamber from which the young Governor ruled all the vast Indian Territory. High and spacious, it has one semi-circular wall overlooking the vineyard which grew between the house and the river. At the right of the fireplace is a false window, since plastered up, but still having its exterior shutters. It appeared to be a window on the outside, for all the front shutters were kept closed, so it would not be known which was the port hole.

Harrison's official desk stands in this room. The supposed secret drawer remains a mystery. A quaint rocking chair belonging to Harrison's mother is a valued relic; the center of the room is graced by a recent purchase, a round drop-leaf mahogany table, Duncan Phyfe type, which belonged to Harrison. Two semi-round table ends, parts of a whole dining table belonging to Francis Vigo; some period chairs, seats, an old table, a melodeon, and old square piano of later period complete the furnishing of the Council Chamber. Resting on the piano is the original deed to Mr. Sam Thompson in payment for the bricks used in the house. It is interesting to note the scalloped cut edge title, called "indenture" to tell if the deed were legal. Each party kept his half of the scallop, this being the procedure of the time in lieu of seals. Another old deed is signed by John C. Symmes, Harrison's father-in-law. (Since writing these papers, these deeds have been removed to another part of the house.)

Among the pictures, we have here two of especial value, Washington and his Generals, and Washington's Funeral.

And now that we have completed our tour of the first floor, let us pause a few minutes in the Council Chamber to review briefly its historical significance.

Of first importance are the documents and treaties signed with and concerning the Indians--a vital question of that day, with which the young Governor of the Northwest Territory had to cope. Other interesting items are: In 1806, the first Presbyterian sermon in Indiana Territory was preached in this room. Likewise, Methodist tradition states that the first Methodist service was conducted in this room, Governor Harrison himself holding a candle for the preacher. It is said that the first Indiana Masonic Lodge was organized here in 1808. But the most important function of the room was its use by the Governor and the Judges who shaped the policies of the pioneer country.

Both in Harrison's time and in that of his son to whom he deeded the property, the Mansion was a social center of the town. The first Public Library was kept here in the son's occupancy. As stated before, the house passed into other hands than the Harrisons' in 1843.

But we still have many things to see, so we shall hasten up the lovely stairs, past the narrow window, once wider, and here we are on the second floor.

Maude B. Hohn

Compiled and read Feb.17, 1930

WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON HOME
VINCENNES, INDIANA

IV.

THE UPPER FLOORS

Ascending the beautiful spiral staircase to the upper hall, the most conspicuous feature of this hall is the lovely door which lights it. In years gone by some one had changed the glass in this door, probably to suit the times, putting in two large panes. But this door was restored only last year and now has the small panes of glass, as do all the windows, making it as it was in the time of Harrison. Shutters were added on the outside last year as shown in an old picture found recently. Some interesting spinning wheels used at the time of Harrison's residence, and loaned for exhibition, are placed in this hall; also many interesting documents which are to be mounted in a folding case attached to the wall.

The southwest bed-room, always called the Francis Vigo room because of the furnishings, some of which belonged to him, is a spacious well lighted room, having three large windows, two of them in the bowed wall that occurs from the basement to the roof. Originally these windows had inside shutters as well as outside. In time they have disappeared, but the mouldings remain, and the deep sockets into which the shutters folded back when opened. This construction was common to all the windows in the main part of the mansion. The panels under the windows show that although it was very tedious and expensive at that time to make mouldings, no time or expense was spared in the construction of this house.

The mantel in this room is deserving of notice. It is the original mantel, and is all hand-carved.

On the west side of the fireplace are found small closets probably used as wine closets. Above is a space with a removable panel which we like to think might have held money or valuable papers, stored there for safe keeping at the time the Indians were giving so much trouble. The wide boards in the floor are the original floor boards, many having been replaced; but it is remarkable that so many original boards remain. The bed, a lovely low poster corded bed, belonged to Francis Vigo, the man whose history is so intimately associated with that of George Rogers Clarke,

and in whose home Harrison and family lived while waiting for the completion of the Mansion, and in recognition of whom the Francis Vigo Chapter, D.A.R. was named. A chair with braided seat, and a boot-jack were also once property of Vigo. These precious articles, with a chest of drawers having glass knobs, a mirror with a broad mahogany frame over the chest, several old chairs, and an old stage-coach trunk help to make this room attractive.

The small room back of this was probably used as a guest room. In it are two large windows, the one on the end being in the segment of the bow that continues from the front room. The closet used by guests probably was in the hall just outside the door, and next to the attic stairs. Some interesting museum articles are exhibited in this room at present.

Across the hall from the Vigo room is the master bedroom, the one occupied by Harrison. This room too has the original hand-carved mantel. The shutters of this room are folded back and nailed in place instead of being removed as in the other bed chambers. It is interesting to see the old hinges, and I for one, am sorry the shutters cannot be opened. In this room the bedstead is a four-poster design, also brought from the Vigo home. (In 1934, this loan was recalled, and in its place an antique four-poster, corded bed was bought by the Chapter, history unknown.) There is a chest of drawers taken out of the old Episcopal rectory, table, chairs, and an old period cradle. The childrens' room must have been the one just back of the Harrison bed-room. It is rather small, with a fire-place and mantel, at the side of which is another type of shelved closet with doors, reaching from floor to ceiling. In this room are several pieces of childrens' doll furniture, a high chair, another cradle, a dresser, and a lovely old clock, and some old dolls.

There is a little north room between this childrens' room and the stairway which I like to call the "mystery room" as I have found no record or person who can tell me positively to what use it was put or how it was arranged at the time of Harrison. Being so small, only about five by six feet, with one large window, it could not have been used as a bedroom. The west wall is curved to conform with the wall of the curving staircase

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adjacent. It is in the angle formed here that the boys removed the boards from the floor and discovered the dark closet below which has been previously described. There is a step down to the board flooring that was removed, and a break in the outer molding or baseboard that might mean that there was at one time a low door that led to a covered or uncovered passage to the servants' building in the rear, and over the roof of the covered but open court below. Because of the two doors in this tiny room, and markings on the floor, it is evident that there was once a partition dividing it, leaving the part with the curved wall a dark room. The newspaper of 1886, quoted frequently in these papers, gives the following description of this corner. "Nine doors open into the upper hall, the first of which admits you to a black closet triangular in shape, with one curved wall, at the narrow end of which a step descending reveals a low door which opened into a long narrow dark passage from the front to the back wing." On the outside wall at this point, there are marks that indicate that a pointed roof at one time covered the open court, which would have left room for a low garret. Certainly the servants had some means of passing from the front building to the rear without using the front stairway. There were servants to care for the children and to wait upon the ladies who were guests in the Mansion, as well as those who attended to the routine work of the upstairs. This seems to be the only plausible solution of the problem. Tradition also gives this angle as the spot where the ladder descended to the first floor, with another reaching to the attic above, as a means of escape to the ground floor.

The attic is a very interesting spot to visit, as it is unfinished, and one may see the handmade laths of uneven length and width, the old fashioned plaster made of lime mixed with sand, to which was added hair saved from animals to give it the necessary adhesive quality. This attic extends over the whole of the main building. Here may be seen the huge hand hewn beams of black walnut secured with handmade wooden pegs, used instead of nails, which comprise the framework supporting the massive roof, in accordance with the type of construction prevalent in that early period. The first roof was of handmade shingles fastened with handwrought nails. Lighting the attic are two dormer windows. The one facing east has been restored to match the north

window. They have small panes and a fan above. 2

(In 1933, a new roof of asbestos and cement shingles, made in imitation of hand-hewn clapboards was superimposed on the old shingles, so that the roof is in keeping with its period, and also fire-proof.)

Evidently at the time of construction, two dormer windows were planned to face south, but were never built. The huge beams of the south slope have at some time been cut out to provide for these dormers, but the plan was evidently abandoned, as the beams were rejoined and securely fastened. The beams supporting the roof have recently been reinforced with steel. This was necessary as some of the supports had been weakened by dry rot, by blasting by the Water Co. in the neighborhood, and alas! by pilfering relic hunters who had at some time removed some of the wooden pins.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the attic, especially to boys, is the lookout which surmounts the center of the roof. It is still reached by a small, crude ladder. It was evidently used by Harrison for observation purposes. In case of Indian attack, signals from this lookout could be seen from Fort Sacville less than a mile down stream, and in the Old Post village, or Vincennes.

The second floor of the secondary building, or servants' quarters, is reached by a narrow and steep winding stairway ascending from the middle of the north end of the house, and comprises two bedrooms and a narrow hallway. This hall is lighted by a door opening out onto the roof of what was once the open court. At the north end of the hall is a dark passage opening into the east bedroom, and was probably only another means of escape in case of attack to the back stairs, or else was a hiding place. This is one place in the house that successive owners have not meddled with.

Each of these bedrooms have a small fireplace and mantel, a dormer window, and a small "Eye-brow" window. The floors, still the original boards, are scarred by the glowing embers which dropped from the small grate unnoticed, burning the wood quite deep, but being discovered before any real damage was done. Members of the State Conservation Department consider this secondary building as interesting and valuable as an architectural study as the main building.

As time passes, the action of the Daughters of the American Revolution in preserving and restoring this historic home is more deeply appreciated by historians and those who make a study of earlier days, and by people

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generally. This is best evidenced by the fact that last year, thirteen thousand persons paid for the privilege of inspecting this grand old mansion which links the present with the romantic and historic past.

May we hope that the thousands to come will make it possible to completely restore and furnish this relic of the past! Is it too much to expect that it can once again be viewed in its original setting of spacious lawns, old-fashioned flower beds and a replica of the grove where Harrison met Tecumseh? This is the cherished dream of the members of the Francis Vigo Chapter and the State Daughters of the American Revolution.

-Harriet LaPlant

-March 17, 1930

Reviewed 1936 by H.C.F.

ADDENDUM TO
WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON HOUSE
(GROUSELAND)
Park and Scott Streets
Vincennes
Knox County
Indiana

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